

**New York State Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
Application Instructions**

Instructions for completing the application:

Complete all non shaded areas and answer all questions.

List everyone who lives in your dwelling, even if they are not related to you or contributing financially to your household. You may be required to provide proof of identity for all household members.

Social Security numbers are required for all household members. If any member does not have a social security number but has applied for one, write the word "applied" in the social security box. If you leave this section blank for any household member, your application will not be processed but will be pended for further information.

List ALL income for all household members. All amounts should be entered as gross income prior to any deductions. You may be required to provide proof of income. Eligibility will be based on your household's gross monthly income for the month of application.

Please enter the gross amount of your Social Security and the amounts you pay for Medicare Part B or D. Amounts for Medicare Parts B and D are excluded as income.

Only the interest or dividend portions of bank accounts, CDs, stocks, bonds, or other investment income are used to calculate your income. Enter the amount received for the previous twelve (12) months.

Make sure to SIGN and date the application. The application must be signed by the person who has the heating bill in their name, or who pays the bill if it is in someone else's name. If heat is included in the rent, the primary tenant must complete and sign the application.

Motor Voter Registration:

Please include the Motor Voter form with your application. Complete this form if you are not registered to vote and you want to register. This does not affect your HEAP eligibility or benefit amount.

HOW TO APPLY

You may be eligible to mail in your application if you meet the following criteria:

- The head of household is age 60 or older
- The head of household is currently in receipt of Code A (live alone) Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- The head of household is currently in receipt of monthly Temporary Assistance or Food Stamp benefits
- The head of household is permanently disabled and currently receives Social Security benefits
- The head of household applied for and received a HEAP benefit in the previous HEAP program year and continues to reside in the county.

If you have a question about whether or not you can mail in, contact Erie County HEAP Office at (716) 858-7644.

WHAT WILL I NEED TO APPLY?

MAIL IN APPLICATIONS:

- If you are allowed to mail in, you will need to submit documentation of earned income for any household members that have earned income. Earned income includes wages, self-employment and rental income. Copies of the last four (4) weeks' paystubs must be sent for each person with wages.
- Self employment income may be calculated based on one of the options:
 - Income and expenses for the three (3) months prior to your application. Proof of income and expenses will be required, or
 - Most recently filed federal tax information. A copy of the filed federal tax return, including all schedules, must be provided. This method cannot be used if a federal tax return was not filed or business expenses were not itemized.
- If your household receives rental income, proof of income and expenses for the twelve (12) months prior to your application are required
- You may also be asked to provide other verification or documentation, depending on your circumstances.

IN PERSON APPLICATIONS:

If you are not allowed to mail in your application, you will need to apply in person and provide documentation of household composition, Social Security number for each household member, address, vendor relationship and all income sources. Contact the Erie County HEAP Hotline at 858-7644 for a list of acceptable documentation. You will also be required to be interviewed by a HEAP certifier.

WHERE TO APPLY:

You must apply in the county which you currently reside. In Erie County, you can apply for assistance at 478 Main Street, Buffalo. If you have questions or need additional information call the Erie County HEAP Hotline at (716) 858-7644.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM ELIGIBLE?

You will receive a notice to let you know if your application has been approved or denied. If you are approved and you pay for heat, your payment will be sent to your heating fuel vendor. In some cases, your benefit will be paid to your electric company if heat is included in your rent. Your notice will tell you the amount of the benefit, how it will be paid, and how it was calculated. Vendors will not make deliveries until payment is received or until instructed to do by the local Department of Social Services.

Regular HEAP benefits are intended to be a one-time supplement to your annual energy costs and are not intended to replace your personal payments. You should continue to pay your bills.

WHAT IF I HAVE AN EMERGENCY?

HEAP benefits can assist with the following emergencies:

- You are out of fuel or have less than ¼ tank of oil, kerosene or propane, or less than a ten (10) day supply of other deliverable heating fuel.
- Your natural gas or electric heat has been shut off
- Applicant owned heating equipment is not working.

If you have a heating emergency and have applied for, but have not received, your regular benefit, contact the Erie County HEAP office at (716) 858-7644. Whenever possible, regular HEAP benefits are used first to resolve an energy emergency.

In many cases, you may be eligible to apply for emergency benefits by phone. You can apply by phone if you have already been approved for or received a regular benefit for this program year or if you are currently in receipt of monthly Temporary Assistance or Food Stamps benefits. Call (716) 858-7644 to apply.

DO NOT WAIT UNTIL YOU ARE OUT OF HEATING FUEL OR YOUR GAS/ELECTRIC SERVICE IS OFF TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE.

All applications for heating equipment repair or replacement must be in person with full documentation.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Citizen/Alien Information:

In order to receive HEAP you must be a United States Citizen, Qualified Alien, or non-citizen U.S. National. For additional information on what constitutes a Qualified Alien or non-citizen U.S. national, please contact the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance hotline at 1-800-342-3009 or visit the OTDA website at <http://www.otda.state.ny.us>

Application Rights:

You have certain rights when filling your HEAP application. You have the right to be told if your application is approved or denied with thirty (30) business days of the date that the HEAP certifier receives your complete and signed application.

Please Note: *The processing time for application received prior to November 1, 2010 will not begin until program opening in November 2010 although you may have received an application prior to the program opening date as part of our outreach effort.*

You have the right to request a conference and/or a fair hearing if it has been more than thirty (30) business days since the HEAP certifier received your signed and completed application (or it has been more than thirty business days since the November program opening if the certifier received your application prior to the November 2010 program opening and you have not been told the eligibility of the decision).

If you would like a conference, you should ask for one as soon as possible. At the conference, if it is discovered that a wrong decision was made, or if because of information you provide, the decision is changed; corrective action will be taken.

If you would like a conference, please contact the Erie County HEAP Office at (716) 858-7644. This is only for requesting a conference. It is not how you ask for a fair hearing. If you ask for or have a conference, you are still entitled to a fair hearing.

You can request a fair hearing from the New York State Office of Disability Assistance by:

Calling, toll free:
1-800-342-3334

Or by Writing to:

NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
Office of Administrative Hearings
P.O. Box 1930
Albany, NY 1220-1930.

If you request a fair hearing, NYS will send you a notice of the time and place of the fair hearing. You have the right to be represented by a legal counsel, a relative, friend, or other person, or to represent yourself. At the hearing, your attorney or other representative will have the opportunity to present written and oral evidence to demonstrate why the action shouldn't be taken, as well as the opportunity to question any persons who appear at the hearing. Also, you have the right to bring witnesses to speak in your favor. You should bring to the hearing any documents that may be helpful in presenting your case.

If you need free legal assistance, you may be able to obtain such assistance by contacting your local Legal Aid society or other legal advocate group. You may locate the nearest Legal Aid society or advocate group by checking the yellow pages under "lawyers".

You have the right to review your case record. Upon your request, you have the right to free copies of documents that the Erie County Department of Social Services presents into evidence at the fair hearing. Also, upon request,

you have the right to free copies of other documents from your case record that you need for your fair hearing. To request such documents or to find out how you may review your case record, contact the Erie County HEAP Office at (716) 858-7644.

Si necesita alguien que hable español, comuníquese con la línea directa de NYS OTDA al 1-800-342-3009.

Telephone Lifeline Program:

If you qualify to receive HEAP, you also qualify for low cost local telephone service under the Lifeline Program. You can get basic local service for as low as \$1.00 per month, plus per call charges and taxes. Unless you sign the declination on the application, we may share your name with Verizon so that you can be automatically enrolled in Lifeline. You may also contact your telephone company to receive a Lifeline application, or for more information on the Lifeline Program. This does not affect your HEAP eligibility or benefit amount.

OTHER PROGRAMS YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR:

Weatherization Assistance

You may also be eligible for weatherization assistance. For more information:

If your Head of Household is 60 years of age or older, call Erie County Senior Services at (716) 858-8526.

If your Head of Household is under 60 years of age, call the HEAP Hotline at (716) 858-7644.

More information can also be found at, <http://nysdhcr.gov/Programs/WeatherizationAssistance/>. Your signature on the HEAP application allows a referral to be made to the weatherization assistance program on your behalf.

MY BENEFITS

Additional information about HEAP and other human services programs can be found at MY BENEFITS. You can also conduct a self-screen for eligibility for HEAP and other programs. Please go to: <https://www.mybenefits.ny.gov/selfservice/> for more information.